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Letter from John W. H. Baker to Julia Ann Baker, 1854 Apr. 25 and Apr. 27

John W. H. Baker

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Mokelumne Hill April 25, 1854

My dear wife

I again commence my usual semi-monthly letter and with a very scanty supply of material unless I take to writing "love letters", and those you know I am not accustomed to writing. I am enjoying very excellent good health which to you I suppose will be as important news as you can hear. I make that known at the commencement of the letter, as some letter writers think the proper method of letter writing is to give the most important matters the first place in a communication, notwithstanding many act in opposition to the rule. I received your very short letter (on Thursday, Apr. 20th) bearing date March 17th and under existing circumstances was very ready to excuse you from writing more. I am in hopes to hear by your next that you are enjoying your health again, and are free from trouble with your teeth. I rejoice to think you are rid of two of them, and if your front ones are very troublesome I would advise you to have them extracted, and when you have had all the bad one out I will try and furnish you the means for some artificial ones to supply the place of those you have lost. I suppose you were feeling quite out of sorts when you wrote me the last letter, as you seemed to think it of no importance whether I did much business or not, and was feeling that you did not care how soon I was ready to return. Now I have a little different opinion. I wish my business was twice as large as it is at present, and supposing it was so I should soon be ready to return to my dear family, the safety and comfort of which in the time of my absence has been my greatest wish and anxiety. When I look back and see how short a time it really is since I left you, and when I consider the frequency of my reception of letters from you, I am consoled in a measure for absence, and again when I compare my prospect even with the business I am now doing I feel that it is my duty to remain here at present or until

I can return with a sum of money adequate to my establishment in business without the necessity of involving myself in debt again. I sometimes think I should like my old situation in Meriden again, but there are many things adverse to such a wish--and nothing would give me a wish to do so unless I was able to do so without owing a man one cent, and it would be convenient to have some few dollars over and above such a chance as that. I have heard from several sources that Dr. Lane is not doing all of my business. I am sorry to hear it. I would like to know whether he is discouraged and wishes to sell. What would he take for his place? I certainly have some strong attachments to my old situation in Meriden, but still I hope to make as pleasant a home somewhere else when I am permitted to return to you with means to provide a home for us. Under every consideration I think I should remain in California about 2 years in order to accomplish the object of my wishes. You will remember that when I first thought of going to California I made the remark that if ever I did anything more than live in that place with just enough to support my family decently and pay my interest money I thought that my chance in California must be there, and under that consideration I made a firm resolve which thus far has been executed with very marked success, although it has caused me many hours of sorrow, sickness, anxiety and fear. I was in sorrow to leave you and my children behind me for so long a time as I would be obliged to in my intended journey. I was quite sick for many days on my journey out here. So much so that the stewardess on board the boat from N. Y. predicted my death before my arrival at the Isthmus, but by the Providence of God I was spared to see the end of my journey and to recover my health. Since which time I have enjoyed better health than I had had for five years with the exception of a short attack of Rheumatism in Jan'y last. I have had hours of anxiety

and fear for the welfare of you and the children, fearing you might be attacked with sickness and some one of you might be taken away by death, or that some unlooked for event would transpire which might separate us forever. I have felt anxious for the result of my undertakings and many times wish I might accomplish my mission in a few short days or weeks at most.

Thursday, Apr. 27th.

I conclude to finish my letter today as the Mail for the States closes this eve and leaves tomorrow morning for San Francisco. Since writing my last date of this letter previous to this I have had an attack of sick headache. Was very much in the condition that I have frequently been in Meriden, but after vomiting and resting over night, felt better. I should feel quite well today had I not been called up some 4 times last night to wait upon a patient who is having a slight attack of delirium tremens. I have today bathed myself well and changed my clothes and am now feeling quite comfortable for a hot day. We see some of the most beautiful boquets of flowers about the streets, more beautiful than I ever saw in the States. Flowers such as I have often seen in pots, grow wild here and I long for Dr. H. to return that I may have the privilege of a ramble upon the hills and gather some specimens to preserve. Tell Sarah I will tray and send a few of the plants in some papers if I succeed in obtaining some in a shape to send, but she cannot expect much from them untill I return and then I design to have many of them pressed and shall bring them along with me. Tell the children that I wish them to be very good and if they are so I shall expect to hear so from your next letter. I shall send them another present in some shape if I hear of their good behaviour. I do not think of anything further to write which will be of interest. I am having a pretty good business at the present time, am doing from \$30 to \$60 per day--I have

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not heard from Dennis Orr. I wrote him some time since. Give my respects to all enquiring friends with these few lines I close this communication--Please accept these with the prospect of a longer next time

From your husband

Mrs. Julia A. Baker
Meriden, N.H.

John Wm. H. Baker